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ABSTRACT

Data from the National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF), a nationally representative survey of college faculty members conducted by the U.S. Department of Education, were used to analyze faculty satisfaction. Findings show that the vast majority of faculty members are satisfied with their jobs. Eighty-five percent of all full-time and part-time faculty members indicated their overall satisfaction with their job in the NSOPF survey completed in fall 1999. Faculty members were most satisfied with the autonomy they had to decide the content of their own courses, and they expressed the least satisfaction with their salaries. They were less content with benefits, advancement opportunities, effectiveness of faculty leadership, and time to keep current in their field. Part-time faculty members were more satisfied with their jobs overall than their full-time counterparts. The flexibility of part-time work appears to have been desirable to a large share of those who worked part time. Tenure status did not make much of a difference in terms of overall job satisfaction, but it did make a difference in job security and advancement opportunities. Unions status did make a difference in satisfaction, especially with regard to pay, benefits, advancement opportunities, workload, and job security. (SLD)

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Faculty Satisfaction

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Faculty Satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

The vast majority of faculty members are satisfied with their jobs. Eighty-five percent of all full- and part-time faculty members indicated their overall satisfaction with their job in the NSOPF* survey of college and university faculty members. The NSOPF survey was completed by the U.S. Department of Education in the fall of 1999. Faculty members were most satisfied with the autonomy they had to decide the content of their own courses, and they expressed the least satisfaction with their salaries.

FACULTY AUTONOMY

The top three job attributes with which faculty were satisfied had to do with their freedom to make decisions. Ninety-five percent of faculty members were satisfied with their authority to decide course content (Table 1). Eighty-seven percent were satisfied with their freedom to do outside consulting and 85 percent were satisfied with their authority to decide which courses they taught. They were less satisfied with their authority to make other job decisions—78 percent of faculty members were satisfied with this aspect of their job.

The five job-related factors that were least likely to elicit satisfaction were benefits, advancement opportunities, effectiveness of faculty leadership, time to keep current in their field, and salary.

Table 1

Percentage distribution of faculty according to satisfaction by job factor, in descending order of percent satisfied: 1999

Job factor	Dissatisfied[1]	Satisfied[2]
Authority to decide course content	5.1	94.9
Freedom to do outside consulting	12.6	87.4
Authority to decide courses taught	14.8	85.2
JOB OVERALL	**15.4**	**84.6**
Quality of graduate students	16.3	83.7
Time available to advise students	20.9	79.1
Time available for class preparation	21.3	78.7
Authority to make other job decisions	22.0	78.0
Spouse employment opportunity	23.7	76.3
Workload	25.3	74.7
Job security	26.2	73.8
Quality of undergraduate students	27.9	72.1
Quality of facilities/resources overall	32.6	67.4
Benefits	37.1	62.9
Advancement opportunity	38.1	61.9
Effectiveness of faculty leadership	39.4	60.6
Time to keep current in field	42.0	58.0
Salary	45.2	54.8

[1]Includes those responding very and somewhat dissatisfied.
[2]Includes those responding very and somewhat satisfied.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Study of Postsecondary Faculty: 1999 (NSOPF:99), Data Analysis System (DAS), Washington, DC, 2001.

FULL- AND PART-TIME FACULTY MEMBER SATISFACTION

Forty-three percent of part-time faculty members were very satisfied with their jobs compared with 36 percent of

*National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty was a nationally representative survey of faculty members. Faculty members whose primary responsibility was teaching credit classes are included in this report. This survey excludes teaching assistants.

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the full-timers (Table 2). Further, part-time faculty members were more likely than full-time faculty members to be very satisfied with 11 of the 18 job factors.

The largest satisfaction discrepancy between full- and part-time faculty members was in their satisfaction with workloads. About one-half (51 percent) of the part-time faculty members were very satisfied with their workloads compared with 29 percent of full-time faculty members. Further, part-time faculty members were more likely to be very satisfied with their freedom to do outside consulting than those who taught on a full-time basis—20 percent more of part-time faculty report being very satisfied with their freedom to do outside consulting compared with those teaching full-time (59 compared with 39 percent). Other job characteristics where part-time faculty members were more likely to be very satisfied compared with full-timers included the perceived quality of graduate students, authority to make other job decisions, time to keep current in their field, and the effectiveness of faculty leadership.

In several instances, full-time faculty members were more likely to report being very satisfied than were part-timers. The largest discrepancies were seen in three job features: job security (32 compared to 54 percent), advancement opportunities (20 compared with 36 percent), and benefits (15 compared with 31 percent).

Table 2

Percentage of faculty who stated very satisfied, according to employment status, by job factor: 1999

Job factor	Part-time	Full-time
Advancement opportunity	20.0	35.9
Authority to decide course content	78.3	80.1
Authority to decide courses taught	48.0	52.6
Authority to make other job decisions	48.2	33.6
Benefits	15.4	30.8
Effectiveness of faculty leadership	27.2	13.6
Freedom to do outside consulting	58.9	39.3
JOB OVERALL	**43.2**	**36.4**
Job security	32.4	54.2
Quality of facilities/resources overall	17.9	8.7
Quality of graduate students	53.3	36.3
Quality of undergraduate students	32.8	23.2
Spouse employment opportunity	40.4	40.5
Salary	17.1	15.4
Time available to advise students	42.6	34.5
Time available for class preparation	46.8	34.0
Time to keep current in field	29.2	14.7
Workload	51.0	28.9

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Study of Postsecondary Faculty: 1999 (NSOPF:99), Data Analysis System (DAS), Washington, DC, 2001.

Table 3

Percentage of full-time faculty who stated very satisfied, according to institution type, by job factor: 1999

Job factor	Public doctoral-granting	Other public 4-year	Public 2-year	Private
Advancement opportunity	35.0	36.4	34.1	37.9
Authority to decide course content	79.6	80.5	78.0	81.8
Authority to decide courses taught	47.1	50.0	58.0	55.2
Authority to make other job decisions	32.7	29.3	34.9	36.5
Benefits	31.5	29.7	35.3	27.5
Effectiveness of faculty leadership	10.4	12.0	18.5	14.0
Freedom to do outside consulting	36.6	37.6	38.9	43.3
JOB OVERALL	**31.0**	**33.1**	**44.6**	**27.5**
Job security	53.9	57.9	55.1	51.1
Quality of facilities/resources overall	8.8	5.2	10.5	9.6
Quality of graduate students	32.3	30.1	50.7	40.2
Quality of undergraduate students	23.6	19.7	18.3	29.6
Salary	14.3	14.3	19.0	14.4
Spouse employment opportunity	36.2	38.0	40.5	46.5
Time available for class preparation	33.8	32.1	35.0	34.8
Time available to advise students	32.9	32.5	37.0	35.4
Time to keep current in field	15.0	13.4	15.7	14.6
Workload	26.1	26.4	34.5	28.7

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Study of Postsecondary Faculty: 1999 (NSOPF:99), Data Analysis System (DAS), Washington, DC, 2001.

SATISFACTION BY INSTITUTIONAL TYPE

Across institutional types, there were similarities with which aspects of their jobs full-time faculty were most and least likely to be very satisfied. In all sectors, full-time faculty agreed they were satisfied with their authority to decide course content, job security, and authority to decide courses taught (Table 3). They were also united in their dissatisfaction with their salaries, time to keep current in their fields, and the effectiveness of faculty leadership (Table 4).

Some disagreements existed among faculty members across the sectors. Faculty members in public 2-year institutions were more likely to be very satisfied with their jobs overall, and many individual aspects of the jobs, than faculty members in the other sectors. Forty-five percent of public 2-year faculty members reported being very satisfied overall, compared with 33 percent of faculty members or less in the other institutional types. Further, in 11 of the 18 job characteristics, more full-time faculty members in public 2-year institutions reported being very satisfied than faculty members in the other sectors.

Faculty members in public 2-year institutions indicated higher frequencies of satisfaction with two other job attributes than those in other sectors. First, 35 percent of full-time faculty members in public 2-year institutions reported being very satisfied with their workloads, compared with 26 to 29 percent in the other

Table 4

Percentage of full-time faculty who stated very dissatisfied, according to institution type, by job factor: 1999

Job factor	Public doctoral-granting	Other public 4-year	Public 2-year	Private
Advancement opportunity	12.0	10.4	10.3	11.1
Authority to decide course content	1.4	1.6	2.0	1.5
Authority to decide courses taught	3.9	3.3	3.8	3.0
Authority to make other job decisions	6.6	7.6	7.9	7.2
Benefits	6.1	7.1	4.3	7.8
Effectiveness of faculty leadership	18.4	17.6	15.2	15.3
Freedom to do outside consulting	3.8	4.0	4.6	3.7
JOB OVERALL	**3.6**	**2.7**	**2.1**	**3.8**
Job security	7.0	5.8	5.9	8.0
Quality of facilities/resources overall	1.4	3.3	1.9	2.3
Quality of graduate students	4.2	5.8	1.1	2.7
Quality of undergraduate students	7.7	8.5	6.8	5.9
Salary	18.0	20.6	13.7	20.5
Spouse employment opportunity	11.5	12.6	7.3	7.8
Time available for class preparation	4.2	4.2	7.3	4.5
Time available to advise students	3.4	5.0	4.7	3.2
Time to keep current in field	15.8	18.1	13.6	16.9
Workload	9.4	10.6	10.2	10.0

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Study of Postsecondary Faculty: 1999 (NSOPF:99), Data Analysis System (DAS), Washington, DC, 2001.

Table 5

Percentage of full-time faculty who stated very satisfied, according to tenure status, by job factor: 1999

Job factor	Tenured	On tenure track	Not on tenure track	No tenure track available
Advancement opportunity	43.9	33.4	18.6	21.8
Authority to decide course content	82.0	79.8	74.3	78.0
Authority to decide courses taught	57.9	44.7	44.0	50.6
Authority to make other job decisions	34.4	29.0	36.3	34.9
Benefits	32.0	25.8	36.0	27.8
Effectiveness of faculty leadership	12.5	14.1	15.6	16.4
Freedom to do outside consulting	41.7	32.2	41.5	37.6
JOB OVERALL	**37.5**	**33.5**	**35.0**	**38.3**
Job security	72.4	32.8	24.8	37.0
Quality of facilities/resources overall	7.9	7.3	11.9	11.7
Quality of graduate students	34.0	31.8	43.8	54.4
Quality of undergraduate students	21.0	23.4	34.0	21.4
Salary	16.5	14.3	14.3	13.3
Spouse employment opportunity	40.7	36.2	45.8	41.5
Time available for class preparation	35.6	28.5	38.2	31.4
Time available to advise students	35.0	31.4	38.3	33.5
Time to keep current in field	16.2	11.3	14.6	13.9
Workload	29.3	23.2	34.1	30.6

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Study of Postsecondary Faculty: 1999 (NSOPF:99), Data Analysis System (DAS), Washington, DC, 2001.

sectors. Second, 35 percent of full-time faculty members in public 2-year institutions reported being very satisfied with their benefits, compared with 28 to 32 percent in other sectors.

Interestingly, for those job attributes where the most faculty members were very dissatisfied, a smaller percent of the full-time faculty members in public 2-year institutions reported being very dissatisfied than did faculty members in other sectors. For example, 14 percent of full-time faculty members in public 2-year institutions reported being very dissatisfied with their salaries, compared with 18 to 21 percent in the other sectors (Table 4). Other areas where community college faculty were less likely to be very dissatisfied than their peers in other sectors included benefits, spouse employment opportunities, and time to keep current in their field. In part, this may be related to expectations more than actual working conditions.

SATISFACTION BY TENURE STATUS

Thirty-six percent of full-time faculty members were very satisfied with their jobs overall; this did not vary much by tenure status. However, differences occur for different job attributes.

The most striking differences in satisfaction by tenure status were with the percentage of faculty members reporting satisfaction with job security and advancement opportunities.

Table 6

Percentage of full-time faculty who stated very dissatisfied, according to tenure status, by job factor: 1999

Job factor	Tenured	On tenure track	Not on tenure track	No tenure track available
Advancement opportunity	7.6	8.0	26.8	15.3
Authority to decide course content	1.5	0.9	2.8	2.3
Authority to decide courses taught	2.9	3.9	5.4	3.3
Authority to make other job decisions	6.7	6.6	7.4	11.4
Benefits	5.7	7.5	7.6	6.3
Effectiveness of faculty leadership	16.4	16.3	15.4	19.5
Freedom to do outside consulting	3.1	4.6	5.2	5.8
JOB OVERALL	**2.3**	**3.9**	**4.9**	**3.7**
Job security	1.4	7.4	23.9	12.3
Quality of facilities/resources overall	2.0	2.4	1.9	3.1
Quality of graduate students	3.4	6.0	2.5	1.8
Quality of undergraduate students	7.6	7.0	5.8	6.6
Salary	16.3	20.4	22.5	19.1
Spouse employment opportunity	8.9	14.2	10.4	5.1
Time available for class preparation	4.0	5.2	5.8	8.4
Time available to advise students	3.3	4.5	4.4	6.2
Time to keep current in field	15.4	18.2	13.8	18.6
Workload	8.7	11.8	9.3	13.7

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Study of Postsecondary Faculty: 1999 (NSOPF:99), Data Analysis System (DAS), Washington, DC, 2001.

Table 7

Percentage of full-time faculty who stated very satisfied, according to union status, by job factor: 1999

Job factor	Union member	Not a union member	No union available
Advancement opportunity	40.1	32.9	35.0
Authority to decide course content	79.7	80.3	80.2
Authority to decide courses taught	54.6	51.2	52.1
Authority to make other job decisions	34.2	33.2	33.5
Benefits	37.7	29.8	28.1
Effectiveness of faculty leadership	15.4	14.7	12.6
Freedom to do outside consulting	39.5	37.7	39.6
JOB OVERALL	**41.1**	**35.0**	**34.8**
Job security	60.9	53.5	51.4
Quality of facilities/resources overall	7.4	7.7	9.5
Quality of graduate students	37.3	35.5	36.1
Quality of undergraduate students	19.2	26.4	24.1
Salary	20.0	15.2	13.4
Spouse employment opportunity	42.6	36.8	40.7
Time available for class preparation	36.1	31.6	33.8
Time available to advise students	34.8	33.9	34.5
Time to keep current in field	15.3	15.4	14.3
Workload	32.1	26.6	28.1

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Study of Postsecondary Faculty: 1999 (NSOPF:99), Data Analysis System (DAS), Washington, DC, 2001.

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Seventy-three percent of full-time faculty members who were tenured were very satisfied with their job security; this compares with 37 percent or less of faculty members without tenure (Table 5). Further, more tenured full-time faculty members reported being very satisfied with their advancement opportunities compared with those without tenure.

A couple of other interesting differences by tenure status were seen in the perceived quality of the students. Fifty-four percent of full-time faculty members teaching in institutions with no tenure system reported being very satisfied with the quality of their graduate students compared with 44 percent or less of other faculty. This could be due to the fact that colleges and universities without tenure tend to be smaller institutions. Perhaps faculty in these institutions are closer to their graduate students because of the size and thus, may be more positive about them than would be the case in larger institutions. Similarly, 34 percent of full-time faculty members who were not on tenure track were very satisfied with the quality of their undergraduate students, whereas 23 percent or less of other faculty reported the same.

It is not surprising that full-time faculty members who were not on tenure track were more likely to be very dissatisfied with certain job aspects than were others. These aspects involve job security and advancement opportunities.

Table 8

Percentage of full-time faculty who stated very dissatisfied, according to union status, by job factor: 1999

Job factor	Union member	Not a union member	No union available
Advancement opportunity	9.5	11.2	11.7
Authority to decide course content	1.5	1.5	1.7
Authority to decide courses taught	3.6	3.5	3.4
Authority to make other job decisions	7.3	6.4	7.5
Benefits	4.5	7.1	7.0
Effectiveness of faculty leadership	17.1	15.5	16.7
Freedom to do outside consulting	4.4	4.0	3.8
Job overall	2.6	2.7	3.5
Job security	5.5	7.0	7.3
Quality of facilities/resources overall	2.5	1.6	2.2
Quality of graduate students	3.9	4.8	3.3
Quality of undergraduate students	8.3	6.8	6.7
Salary	14.0	21.7	19.2
Spouse employment opportunity	8.4	9.8	10.2
Time available for class preparation	5.5	4.6	4.8
Time available to advise students	4.8	4.5	3.5
Time to keep current in field	16.1	13.8	16.7
Workload	11.6	8.9	9.6

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Study of Postsecondary Faculty: 1999 (NSOPF:99), Data Analysis System (DAS), Washington, DC, 2001.

Twenty-seven percent of full-time faculty members not on tenure track reported being very dissatisfied with their advancement opportunities, compared with 15 percent or less of other faculty members (Table 6). Similarly, 24 percent of the same group reported dissatisfaction with their job security, compared with 12 percent or less of the others.

SATISFACTION BY UNION STATUS

Union members were more likely to be very satisfied with certain job features, as well as the job overall, than other full-time faculty members. Slightly more full-time faculty union members were very satisfied with their jobs overall than those who were not in unions, 41 percent compared with 35 percent (Table 7). Further, full-time faculty union members were more likely to be very satisfied with their salaries (20 percent compared with 15 percent or less) and benefits (38 compared with 30 percent or less). On the other hand, full-time faculty members who were not in unions were more likely to state they were very dissatisfied with their salaries than those in unions, 22 compared to 14 percent (Table 8).

Union membership also correlated with satisfaction on other job factors. Union members felt more secure in their job. Sixty-one percent of full-time faculty members reported being very satisfied with their job security compared with 54 percent of faculty members not in unions, and 51 percent of

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